

# The English We Use

R. A. Close



New Edition

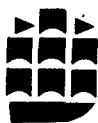
THE  
ENGLISH WE USE

(REVISED EDITION)

AN ANTHOLOGY OF CURRENT USAGE  
WITH EXERCISES

FOR PRACTICE  
IN THE SPOKEN AND WRITTEN LANGUAGE

COMPILED BY  
R. A. CLOSE



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R.A.C.

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# Introduction for the teacher

## Aims and objects of this edition

This revised edition of *The English We Use* has been based on the assumptions that ensured the success of the original book; namely that

- 1 what students of English need above all is practice in hearing and reading real English spoken and written by people who have something interesting to say and who say it effectively;
- 2 particular attention should be paid to aural comprehension and to relevant oral reaction to what is heard;
- 3 while conscious awareness of grammar, and conscious practice in applying it, are no doubt necessary, in the end mastery of grammatical structure can best be acquired by absorbing grammar used naturally in a natural context; and it can generally be acquired more or less unconsciously while the student's attention is focused on the sense of what he is hearing and reading;
- 4 the bricks of composition cannot be made without the straw (of constructions and vocabulary) that the student accumulates through studying well-written contemporary texts. Structural exercises without context, or even those artificially 'contextualised', are not enough.

Although these basic assumptions remain, the contents of the book have been almost completely changed, with the following objects:

- [a] to introduce texts more in tune with the spirit of the nineteen-seventies;
- [b] to increase the proportion of pieces at intermediate level, while retaining a fair number of more advanced ones, so as to bring the book within reach of a larger number of students, including those who would have found the original too difficult;
- [c] to improve the content and lay-out of the exercises;
- [d] to make each Unit (i.e. text and accompanying exercises) more easily manageable in one or two lessons of average length;



[e] to arrange the Units in ascending order of difficulty, rather than according to subject-matter. Ideas as to 'order of difficulty' must, of course, vary with differing personal experience and educational background.

### *Standard*

The standard therefore ranges, as before, from intermediate to advanced, but with more material at the intermediate level. In terms of the examinations held by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate, the intermediate level in this book would correspond approximately to that of the Lower Certificate; and exercises have been set with Lower Certificate examination questions in mind. The advanced level would then correspond to that of the Certificate of Proficiency; and exercises have been devised accordingly. But the material is not tied to the Cambridge examinations. It was first prepared for university departments of English; many such departments have used it; and they follow their own syllabus. It has also been—and can continue to be—used by senior secondary or high school pupils in countries where the standard of English is high; by students of subjects other than English who may need the language as a medium; by teachers of English, who must constantly maintain their proficiency in the subject; and by other professional people wanting a confident command of English for their work.

### *The Texts*

All the texts have, again, been taken from *The Listener*, the weekly journal that publishes broadcast talks by the B.B.C. There is a vast wealth of material from other sources that I might have drawn on. Its very vastness drove me to limit my search; and *The Listener* continues to offer a rich collection of stories, articles and essays by eminent men and women and by good *raconteurs*. The language of their talks is still in the main "the English of excellent conversation" (see Text 51), and it still occupies the broad and fertile zone in which spoken and written English coincide.

All the texts were composed within the second half of the twentieth century. The period they represent has thus been widened to include the last two decades. I have taken them, too, from a wider geographical area. A prime source of the vitality of English is, undoubtedly, the life of the British Isles; but that is only one of the sources. And I have made my selection from a wider range of styles. Some of these may seem casual to an older generation. But it is inevitable that former standards should be loosened and that new

ones should eventually replace them. In any case, the purpose of this book is to present the English we use, not the English that some might regret is used no longer. Treasures of the past fortunately abound elsewhere.

As before, many excellent texts had to be excluded solely because I was unable to adapt them for language study.

## Suggested method of using this book

Each Unit is intended to be dealt with in FIVE STAGES.

### STAGE ONE

**Students listen to the text, with their books closed.**

The aim at this stage is to train students to listen to continuous speech and to understand what they hear. They can listen to a reading of the text, or to a good recording of it. If the talk is to be read, the teacher should rehearse it beforehand, marking pauses and words to be stressed, and consulting a reliable dictionary if in doubt about pronunciation. In the lesson, the teacher should deliver the talk so as to be clearly heard and to arouse and maintain interest. This will entail addressing the audience eye to eye as much as possible, and speaking with a natural expression, while keeping verbatim to the script. In the earlier texts, words likely to block comprehension have been printed in italics, and occasionally annotated. This is a signal to the teacher that a brief explanation may be necessary. It may be necessary at other points as well.

### STAGE TWO

**Questions are asked to test comprehension; to indicate points the students should have understood; and to induce an oral reproduction of the main facts and arguments. Books remain closed.**

Stage Two, in other words, begins with a comprehension hurdle that the students know they will be expected to clear: without it, they would naturally be tempted to sit passively through the talk, waiting for the word to open their books. The questions are usually designed not only to test comprehension but also to act as a stimulus to oral interchange. It is important that the students should understand the questions as well as the text. In the natural use of language, questions play a great part. It often happens that a wrong answer is given because the wrong question is being answered. This is very common with questions beginning with *When* or *Where*: the listener catches

the last, often stressed, part of the question, but misses the relatively unstressed opening word.

In this oral interchange, the first consideration is that the answer should contain the essence of the information required; the next, that interplay of question and reply should be kept brisk and alive; the third, that the answer should be phonologically and grammatically correct. The teacher may therefore have to repeat the exercise, first making sure that facts and arguments are right; then speeding up the answers; and then fitting the right, fluent answer into the original (or otherwise acceptable) pattern of speech. This, incidentally, could be the basis of disciplined 'conversation practice'.

Usually, and unless otherwise indicated, the answers at Stage Two should be 'short'. Thus, the answers to Unit 1, [A], would be: *a plague of monkeys; in India; because monkeys are sacred in India; small and grey; Hari Prasad; He was tall and lean; a huge, grey monkey; He led them away to the old city.*

Where no questions have been set for Stage Two, the teacher can either make up his own, or proceed straight to Stage Three.

#### STAGE THREE

**The students now see the printed text; follow it while the reading or recording is repeated; then read it silently, study it, and read it aloud themselves. They should be able to answer more searching questions on the text than at Stage Two; and usually the answers should be in full sentences. From time to time, the students are given opportunities to form questions as well as answer them, as in Unit 18.**

This is the stage for a full investigation into meaning; and—when the text has been read and re-read, and questions on it have been fully answered—for a reconstruction of part or all of the passage.

#### STAGE FOUR

**This provides practice in grammar and vocabulary found in the text. Students should thoroughly master the constructions and lexis of the text before they proceed to Stage Five.**

#### STAGE FIVE

**Oral discussion and written composition on the subject of the text.**

The composition may—and perhaps should—contain words and constructions used in the text just studied, or in previous texts. What is important is that out of the constructions and lexical items he has learnt, the student should compose original sentences logically connected.

For special attention

*Paraphrase and definition* should be freely used, first to *aid* comprehension (when used by the teacher or when reference is made to a dictionary), and afterwards to *test* comprehension, and as practice in accurate expression (when paraphrase and definition are used by the student himself).

The first object of paraphrase is to express the meaning of a difficult phrase in words that the student ought to know. It is customary for paraphrase to be given to the student as a test; but he may need practice in doing it first—practice in converting a simpler expression into a more complex one (as in Unit 3, exercise [F]), then in converting the more complex expression back into the simpler one. Just to ask the student to put something ‘into his own words’ may be expecting him to do something for which he needs preparation.

An example of a definition is found in Text 6, line 15. Note that one can say either “*Fire-hooks are . . .*” or “*A fire-hook is . . .*”. A definition can often be made by, first, saying to what general class the thing defined belongs, then adding (e.g. by a relative clause or a participial phrase) how the thing defined differs from others of the same class. Ready-made definitions of this kind can be found in good modern English-English dictionaries.

#### GRAMMAR.

It is important to note what actually occurs in the texts. It may be that the ‘grammar’ actually used in these pieces differs, in ‘rule’ and in emphasis, from the ‘grammar’ exercised in certain school-books. If that is so, teachers and students should remember that English grammar is only a codification of actual accepted usage; that the codification may be over-simplified or out-of-date; and that, for the majority of language users, knowing grammar in the abstract is less important either than understanding what one hears and reads, or than speaking and writing in an intelligible, acceptable way. A certain number of grammatical exercises have been set in this book, but all of them are within the context of the passage studied. Many other grammatical points which the teacher will recognise as ‘special problems’, are exercised incidentally in the course of question and answer, so that the student has the opportunity of using the grammar correctly without its being a ‘special problem’ at all.

#### Oral work

This plays a very important part in this book. Most of the questions should be answered orally, in the first place at least; there is plenty

of scope for the interplay of question and answer, on which natural conversation can grow; and, at Stages Two and Three especially, students are often required to repeat stretches of the text more and more fluently, without reading from the book, until the new phrase becomes 'their own words'.

Care should be taken with pronunciation. Unless their pronunciation is already very good, students should not be asked to read the texts aloud until they have heard a good reading or recording of it—perhaps two or three times. Even then, students are likely to make mistakes, particularly over syllable-stress and the pronunciation of vowel sounds in stressed syllables or in monosyllables. It is a good idea to draw their attention to these points by requiring them to find the 'Key Word' for the vowel in the stressed syllable of words like *monkeys, business, superior, wander, wonder* (to take actual examples from the texts). The following might be adopted as Key Words for vowels and diphthongs in the 'Received Pronunciation' of southern British English:

1 see	6 hot	11 burn	15 boy
2 this	7 horn	12 better	16 house
3 pen	8 look	(2nd syllable)	17 note
4 that	9 moon	13 say	18 cheer
5 car	10 sun	14 why	19 chair

There is no need to learn the numbers; but the student should be able to tell, for example, that the vowel in the stressed syllable of *superior* is the same as in the Key Word *cheer*, and so on.

*Written work* is also important: for some students this may be even more important, and certainly no less important, than oral work. Occasionally, this book will indicate when exercises have to be written out; but that can always be a matter for the teacher's discretion. Generally speaking, oral work should be a preparation for written work (as well as being an end in itself); and written work should be a reinforcement of oral work, as well as affording the student an opportunity for thoughtful self-expression.

The above are not rigid instructions. They are suggestions offered in the knowledge that a good teacher is always the best judge of how to use his material with the particular class he happens to be taking at the time.

## Unit 1

### The Pied Piper of Bangalore

*The following story is called 'The Pied Piper of Bangalore'. 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin' is a well-known story, told in English verse by Robert Browning, about a plague of rats in Hamelin in Germany. Nobody could get rid of the rats until a piper arrived, dressed in a pied costume—a costume made of patches of different colours. The Pied Piper got rid of the rats by playing his pipe and drawing all the rats after him out of the town.*

There was a small, grey monkey wearing my best silk tie; another was scratching his back with one of my hairbrushes. I jumped out of bed and yelled. The monkeys looked at me *disdainfully* and disappeared through the window. I went into the bathroom to get myself a drink of water; it was the hottest part of the hot season and I felt terrible. I looked in the mirror, and for a moment thought I had a monkey's face. It was sitting on the edge of the bath squeezing toothpaste over its chest. I rushed out shouting for the *house boy*<sup>1</sup>. All that came in answer to my cry were two more monkeys. The whole house was deserted except for monkeys. They seemed to be everywhere, dozens of them; under tables, swinging on light-fittings, perching on chairs. 5

A plague of monkeys is not like a plague of mice—one cannot just call in the exterminator. The monkey is a sacred animal in India, and one cannot get rid of a monkey simply by *taking a pot-shot at*<sup>2</sup> it. I did not know what to do; so—tipping a few monkeys out of the car—I drove out to get some advice from my Indian friends. Most of them *shrugged their shoulders*. It was either a visitation from the gods, or, if they did not believe in that sort of thing, they still believed enough to advise me not to do anything *drastic*. I moved to a hotel. 10

Three days later, the monkeys were still infesting my house, practically tearing the place apart. That afternoon a friend came back from a business trip.

"I know the answer," he said. "You need a Pied Piper."

"All right. Find me one."

"All you have to do is send a boy down to the city, to this address, to bring back Hari Prasad." 25

Next day we were sitting in the car outside the house, the monkeys still in occupation, when up the road came a tall, lean man holding by the paw a huge, grey monkey. He folded his hands in the traditional Hindu greeting; so did the monkey. Leaving us at the gate, they disappeared into the house. Not more than ten minutes later Hari Prasad emerged, still holding the large monkey by the paw but followed rather raggedly by a seemingly endless horde of small grey monkeys. They all trooped off down the road in the direction of the old city.

Two days later I received a letter saying: "May your honour live in peace. Please to forwarding 20 rupees per bearer attached, being remittance received for services of monkey-taking." It was signed "Hari-Prasad, B.A.(failed)".

MICHAEL EDWARDES

NOTES

- 1 Man who works in a house in India as a servant.
- 2 Carelessly aiming a gun at, and shooting.



*"They seemed to be everywhere, dozens of them . . ."*

STAGE TWO

[A]

- 1 What kind of plague is this story about?
- 2 Where was the plague?
- 3 Why was it difficult to get rid of the monkeys?
- 4 What size and colour were the monkeys in this story?
- 5 Who got rid of them?
- 6 What did Hari Prasad look like?
- 7 What did he bring with him instead of a pipe?
- 8 What did he do with all the small grey monkeys?

[8]

### STAGE THREE

#### [B]

Imagine you are the man who told this story and a journalist is asking you the following questions. First give a short answer to each question, then answer with a sentence.

- 1 What did you see in your room when you woke up?
- 2 What was the monkey doing?
- 3 What else did you see?
- 4 What did you do when you saw this?
- 5 How did the monkeys react to that?
- 6 What did you do then?
- 7 What did you go into the bathroom for?
- 8 *Why* did you want a drink?
- 9 What did you see in the mirror?
- 10 What did you think when you saw it?
- 11 What was *this* monkey doing?
- 12 *Now* what did you do?
- 13 Why didn't the house boy come?
- 14 So *then* where did you go?
- 15 What did you want your friends to do about it?
- 16 What did they advise?
- 17 What in fact *did* you do about it?
- 18 Who suggested that you should send for Hari Prasad?
- 19 Why didn't you ask this friend's advice in the first place?
- 20 What were the monkeys doing when you last saw them?

[C] Reconstruct the story orally by linking together the complete answers to the questions in [B].

### STAGE FOUR

[D] Put each of the following pairs of sentences together to form one sentence, so that each of the new sentences has only one finite verb and at least one phrase containing the -ING form of a verb, as in the example:

*Example:* There was a small grey monkey by my bed. It was wearing my best silk tie. *This will become:* There was a small grey monkey by my bed wearing my best silk tie.

- 1 A monkey was sitting on the edge of the bath. It was squeezing toothpaste over its chest.
- 2 I rushed out. As I went, I shouted for the house boy.
- 3 Monkeys seemed to be everywhere. They were under tables, swinging on light-fittings, perching on chairs.



- 4 I tipped a few monkeys out of my car. Then I drove out to get some advice from my friends.
- 5 The monkeys were still in my house. They were practically tearing the place apart.
- 6 Up the road came a tall, lean man. He was holding by the paw a huge grey monkey.
- 7 They left us at the gate. Then they disappeared into the house.
- 8 The small grey monkeys followed Hari Prasad. Then they all trooped off down the road.
- 9 You must not shoot monkeys. You cannot get rid of a plague of monkeys in that way.
- 10 But you can hire a monkey-charmer. That is how you can get a plague of monkeys out of your house.

**[E] Look at the Table of Vowel Sounds on page 6. Then give the Key Word for the vowel sound in the stressed syllable of each of the following:**

monkey hairbrush toothpaste plague sacred  
dozens friends shoulders business minute (part of hour)

#### **STAGE FIVE**

**[F] Looking at the questions in [B] and using the answers to those questions as a framework, write out of the story without referring to the text.**

**[G] Re-write Hari Prasad's letter correctly. Then write two more letters, one from Michael Edwardes to Hari Prasad thanking him for his services, the second from Michael Edwardes to his business friend to report what happened as a result of the latter's advice.**